

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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Application No.: 09/347,175 Group Art Unit: 1645

Filed: July 1, 1999 Examiner: R. Zeman

OLIGOMERIZATION OF HEPATITIS DELTA ANTIGEN



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REPLY TO RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT
AND REQUEST FOR
CONSIDERATION OF SELECTED CLAIMS

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Responsive to the Restriction Requirement dated May 8, 2001, the claims of Group I (Claims 1-6) drawn to fusion molecules comprising HDAG and at least one binding moiety, classified in class 424, subclass 225.1, are elected for prosecution. An extension of time to respond to the Restriction Requirement is respectfully requested. A Petition for an Extension of Time and the appropriate fee are being filed concurrently. Applicants reserve the right to file a continuing application or take such other appropriate action as deemed necessary to protect the non-elected inventions. Applicants do not hereby abandon or waive any rights in the non-elected inventions.

The requirement is being traversed for the reasons set forth in detail below.

Request for Consideration of Selected Claims

Criteria for Restriction

There are two criteria for a proper requirement for restriction between patentably distinct inventions: (a) the inventions must be independent or distinct as claimed; and (b) there must be a serious burden on the examiner if restriction is required. (Manual of Patent Examining Procedure MPEP, 7th edition, 803).

The Restriction Requirement

The restriction requirement sets forth 52 different groups for restriction. Because of the complexity of the restriction requirement, the discussion herein of the traversal has been limited to the particular Groups for which recombination is requested.

Applicants respectfully requests that certain groups be recombined with elected Group I. Specifically, Applicants requests that Groups I, II, XXVI-XLVII and XLVIII be combined and examined together. These Groups were selected because of their closely related subject matter. To facilitate discussion, the Groups of interest, the claims encompassed by the Groups, and the subject matter of the Groups are set forth in the following Table.

Group Number	Claims in Group	Restriction requirement description of Subject Matter of Claims in Group
I	1-6	Fusion molecules comprising HDAG and at least 1 binding moiety, classified in class 424, subclass 225.1.
II	7-10, 18 and 19	A coiled-coiled oligomer comprising the fusion molecules, classified in class 530, subclass 350.
XXVI-XXXI	16 and 20	A polypeptide encoded by SEQ ID NO: 10 (Group XXVI); SEQ ID NO: 12 (Group XXVII); SEQ ID NO: 13 (Group XXVIII); SEQ ID NO: 14 (Group XXIX); SEQ ID NO: 21 (Group XXX); SEQ ID NO: 23 (Group XXXI). Classified in class 530, subclass 350.
XXXII-XLVII	17 and 21	A polypeptide encoded by SEQ ID NO: 1 (Group XXXII); SEQ ID NO: 2 (Group XXXIII); SEQ ID NO: 3 (Group XXXIV); SEQ ID NO: 4 (Group XXXV); SEQ ID NO: 5 (Group XXXVI); SEQ ID NO: 6 (Group XXXVII).... Classified in class 530, subclass 350.
XLVIII	41-45	Methods of enhancing the interaction between binding partners. Classified in class 435, subclass 7.1.

Modification of the restriction requirement to consider these Groups concurrently is appropriate for the reasons set forth below.

A. Groups I and II should be rejoined

1. Claims 1 and 7-10 are a combination/subcombination which lacks two-way distinctness

The Examiner states at page 8 of the Office Action that inventions I, II and XXVI-XLVII are separate and distinct from each other as they comprise completely differing biochemical and physical entities having differing properties and uses. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Elected Group I consists of Claims 1-6. Claim 1 is directed to a fusion molecule comprising HDAG and at least one binding moiety. Claims 7-10 are in Group II. Claim 7 is directed to a coiled-coil oligomer comprising at least two fusion molecules of Claim 1, and Claims 8-10 are dependent upon Claim 7, providing further limitations on the oligomer. Therefore, Claim 1 is a subcombination of the combination of Claims 7-10. See M.P.E.P. §806.05(a) ("A combination is an organization of which a subcombination or element is a part").

To support a requirement for restriction, two-way distinctness must be demonstrated. M.P.E.P 806.05(c). To establish distinctness, it must be shown that the combination as claimed does not require the particulars of the subcombination as claimed for patentability. Here, Claims 7-10 do require the particulars of Claim 1 as the essential distinguishing feature of the Claims, and, thus, the inventions are not distinct. Therefore, the requirement for restriction should not be made. Furthermore, both groups enjoy the same classification as compositions containing peptide oligomers. Claim 1 has an original classification within Class 530, not 424. Claim 7, a multimer or dimer of Claim 1, with a specified physical orientation, enjoys the same classification.

2. The peptide of Claim 18 differs from HDAG of Claim 1 solely by a single residue

Although Claim 18 has been placed in Group II, it is not drawn to a coiled-coiled oligomer comprising fusion molecules. Rather, Claim 18 is directed to a derivative of an HDAG peptide wherein a serine residue is substituted with a single residue, cysteine. As such, the classification of the two groups should be the same. In view of the close similarity between the two core sequences, the literature and electronic searches should also be the same. Since the search for Group I would include art related to HDAG, the substitution of a single amino acid will not seriously increase the search burden for the Examiner.

3. Claims 1 and 19 are a combination/subcombination

Likewise, Claim 19 has been placed in Group II although it is not drawn to a coiled-coiled oligomer comprising two fusion molecules. Rather, it is drawn to an HDAG polypeptide molecule and fragments and derivatives. Such a molecule would be a subcombination of Claim 1, which is drawn to a fusion molecule comprising HDAG *and* at least one binding moiety. The claims lack two-way distinctness because Claim 1 does require the particulars of the HDAG peptide molecule as an essential distinguishing feature. Therefore, restriction of the claims is improper.

B. Groups I and XXVI-XLVII should be rejoined

1. Claims 16, 17, 20 and 21 are each directed to compounds within Markush groups with common utility and a common structural feature responsible for the utility

The Restriction Requirement includes five groups, XXVI-XXXI, which each contain the same two claims, Claims 16 and 20. These claims are both dependent upon Claim 11, which contains a Markush group directed to nucleic acid molecules. Claims 16 and 20 are restricted into the five groups based on the SEQ ID NOs. of the nucleic acid molecules in the Markush group.

Likewise, the Restriction Requirement includes 11 groups, XXXII-XLVII, which each contain the same two claims, Claims 17 and 21. Claim 17 is directed to a molecule comprising a

polypeptide having an amino acid sequence selected from a Markush group comprising amino acid sequences identified by SEQ ID NO's., portions of such sequences, and fragments and derivatives thereof which form a coiled-coil oligomer. Claim 21 is ultimately dependent upon Claim 12, which contains a same Markush group comprising the same amino acid sequence identified by SEQ ID NO's as Claim 17. Claims 17 and 21 are restricted into the 11 separate groups based on these SEQ ID NO's.

These restrictions are both improper unless it can be shown that the subject matter of the claims lacks a common utility and a common structural feature responsible for the utility.

Since the decisions *In re Weber*, 580 F.2d 455, 198 USPQ 328 (CCPA 1978) and *In re Haas*, 580 F.2d 461, 198 USPQ 334 (CCPA 1978), it is improper for the Office to refuse to examine that which Applicants regard as their invention, unless the subject matter in a claim lacks unity of invention. *In re Harnish*, 631 F.2d 716, 206 USPQ 300 (CCPA 1980); *Ex parte Hozumi*, 3 USPQ2d 1059 (Bd. Pat. App. & Int. 1984). Broadly, unity of invention exists where compounds included within a Markush group (1) share a common utility and (2) share a substantial structural feature disclosed as being essential to that utility. (MPEP § 803.02).

The compounds of Groups XXVI-XXXI all share a common utility, namely, they all encode a polypeptide which forms a coiled-coil oligomer. They also share a common structural feature responsible for that activity, i.e., they comprise nucleic acid sequences which encode these polypeptides. Therefore, these groups should be rejoined.

Likewise, the compounds of Groups XXXII-XLVII all share a common utility, namely, they all form a coiled-coil oligomer. They also share a common structural feature responsible for that activity, i.e., they comprise the amino acid sequences which form a coiled-coil oligomer. Therefore, these groups should be rejoined.

When these two criteria (common utility and structural feature) are satisfied, MPEP §803.02 provides a procedure for examining the entire scope of the claim containing the Markush group. Specifically, there is a requirement for an election of species, followed by an examination of the entire scope of the elected species and further to the extent necessary to determine patentability of the Markush-type claim:

In applications containing claims of that nature, the examiner may require a provisional election of a single species prior to examination on the merits. The provisional election will be given effect in the event that the Markush-type claim should be found not allowable. Following election,

the Markush-type claim will be examined fully with respect to the elected species and further to the extent necessary to determine patentability. If the Markush-type claim is not allowable over the prior art, examination will be limited to the Markush-type claim and claims to the elected species, with claims drawn to species patentably distinct from the elected species held withdrawn from further consideration. (Emphasis added).

Applicants therefore request that both restriction requirements be withdrawn and replaced with requirements for election of species (i.e., SEQ ID NOS.). Applicants request further that the elected species be examined, and, upon a finding that the elected species is allowable, that the entire scope of the claims be examined. In the event that the restriction requirement is replaced with a requirement for election of species, Applicants hereby elect the peptide encoded by SEQ ID NO: 10.

Furthermore, Applicants traverse the Examiner's requirement based on the clear statement in MPEP § 803.04, and in the Official Gazette Notice dated November 19, 1996, regarding the examination of patent applications containing nucleotide sequences, which state that "...the Commissioner has decided *sua sponte* to partially waive the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.141 *et seq.* and permit a reasonable number of such nucleotide sequences to be claimed in a single application. Accordingly, in most cases, up to ten (10) independent and distinct nucleotide sequences will be examined in a single application without restriction." In accordance with these established guidelines, Applicant submits that it is reasonable to examine up to approximately ten nucleotide sequences in the subject application, and that, therefore, the six sequences in Groups XXVI-XXXI can be recombined, and, the 11 sequences in Groups XXXII-XLVII can be recombined.

Moreover, as stated in the MPEP at §808.02, in relevant part:

Where, however, the classification is the same and the field of search is the same and there is no clear indication of separate future classification and field of search, no reasons exist for dividing among related inventions.

Here, the claims in Groups XXVI-XLVII have been placed in the identical class and subclass, class 530, subclass 350, and as stated by the Examiner, are related as products. Contrary to the requirements for imposing a restriction requirement when claims are so classified, no evidence has been offered to clearly indicate that the claimed inventions have acquired a separate status in the art, nor has any evidence been presented to show that any of the inventions of Groups XXVI-XLVII would necessitate a search in an area where no art pertinent to the other Groups exists.

2. Claims 16 and 17 relate to Claim 1 as a combination/subcombination

Like Claim 19 in Group II, Claims 16 and 17 are each drawn to peptides comprising amino acid sequences of HDAG. Such peptides are a subcombination of the fusion molecule of Claim 1, which comprises HDAG and at least one binding moiety. The claims lack two-way distinctness because Claim 1 requires the particulars of HDAG as an essential distinguishing feature. Therefore, restriction of the claims into separate groups is improper.

3. No serious burden if Claims 20 and 21 are rejoined with Claim 1

Claims 20 and 21 are drawn to peptides encoded by fusion genes comprising HDAG nucleic acid molecules and heterologous (non-HDAG) peptides. The claims are related, because HDAG of Claim 1 can be encoded by the nucleic acid molecules, the binding moiety of Claim 1 can be heterologous peptide, and, likewise, the heterologous peptide can be a binding moiety. For Claims 20 and 21, as well as Claim 1, the Examiner would search for art regarding HDAG bound to another entity, specifically, a binding moiety (which can be a heterologous peptide) or a heterologous peptide (which can be a binding moiety). Therefore, a single search will identify relevant art pertaining to HDAG and the moiety and/or peptide, so recombining these groups would not be unduly burdensome. Therefore, restriction is not required for these claims.

C. Request for rejoinder of Group XLVIII (Claims 41-45) to Group I (Claims 1-6) is requested under 35 U.S.C. §103(b)

The Examiner states that the inventions I, II and XXVI-XLVII are related to the inventions XLVIII-LII as product and process of use, but are distinct because the compounds of I, II and XXVI-XLVII can be used in other methods such as immunization and antibody production. However, under 35 U.S.C. §103(b)(1), upon timely election by a patent applicant, a biotechnological process using a composition of matter that is novel and nonobvious is considered nonobvious if claims directed to the process and claims directed to the composition are contained in the same application and are owned by the same person. Under §103(b)(2), a patent issued on the process shall also contain the claims to the composition used in that process.

Rejoinder of Group XLVIII (Claims 41-45) and elected Group I (Claims 1-6) is requested because Claims 41-45 recite a biotechnological process using the molecule of Claim 1 and the claims are in the same application and owned by the same entity. Therefore, under §103(b)(2), they should be rejoined.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above arguments, Applicants respectfully requests that the Restriction Requirement be modified as presented herein. Reconsideration and modification of the restriction requirement is requested.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conversation would expedite prosecution of the application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at (781) 861-6240.

Respectfully submitted,

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